

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

8 April 2019

Reef Education Big Focus for The Whitsunday's Big Mango

Art and edu-tourism are set to become a focus for the Whitsundays iconic 'Big Mango' landmark with large scale artwork to go on display for the public.

'Turtle Dream', a 6m stainless steel sculpture by artist Col Henry, and 'Maori Wrasse' by Adriaan Vanderlugt will be temporary outdoor exhibitions at Bowen's Big Mango Visitor Information Centre, which is located on the Bruce Highway and has close to 40,000 visitors a year.

Commissioned for Reef Ecologic's 'Whitsunday Reef Recovery and Public Art Project', the giant sculptures will be delivered and assembled on site on Thursday 11th April and remain on site pending placement within Great Barrier Reef Marine Park at Langford Reef.

Reef Ecologic's Assoc Prof Adam Smith and Jo Stacey and project artists Col Henry, Adriaan Vanderlugt and Jessa Lloyd will be on site on the day, giving talks and engaging with visitors.

'Turtle Dream' required a massive 800 hours of work and lots of innovation in its creation by artist Col Henry. Col said 'This work is a pinnacle of my long public art career, as it symbolises the passion that many people have for the reef, marine species, the oceans, not to mention the planet'

Managing Director of Reef Ecologic Dr Adam Smith is excited to see the public become involved in the project through the medium of outdoor art, reef restoration and citizen science. "At sites such as Manta Ray and Blue Pearl Bay, artworks are considered to provide a boost to the tourism industry, indigenous knowledge and help tell the story of marine life in the Park. This is a catalyst project that has the potential to grow in the future, with edu-tourism trails that people can be involved in."

Tash Wheeler, CEO of Tourism Whitsundays said of the project, "This is a really exciting project and one that Tourism Whitsundays is thrilled to be involved in. We believe these artworks will play a vital part in providing new exciting experiences for visitors to our glorious region, we also hope this project will highlight the local tourism industries commitment to reef health and education".

Bowen Tourism & Business manage the Bowen Visitor Information Centre and are excited to collaborate through providing project and reef information to visitors and creating interpretive signage design. BTB Chair Jenn Honnery said "Public artwork is such a great way to engage, interact and inspire our visitors and community. Having our information centre team on hand to engage with and educate visitors on reef health and interaction is a big value-add to the project, which we're so proud to support."

The installation of the artwork complements the sculptures by Adriaan Vanderlugt currently on display in the Big Mango grounds, which were part of the project trial installation at Langford Reef.

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Bowen Tourism & Business is a not-for-profit organisation driven by a team of passionate staff, volunteers and local business committee representation. Our mission is to provide excellence in visitor experience and business member support through exceptional customer service, fostering business advancement & relationships and community involvement. Working with and supported by local & regional businesses, Whitsunday Regional Council & Tourism Whitsundays we proudly provide destination marketing, business support, local engagement, networking & growth opportunities for our members, visitors & Bowen community.